













## SHIPPING.

**ARRIVALS.**  
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**DEPARTURES.**  
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**CLARIFICATIONS.**  
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**COASTERS INWARDS.**  
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Estimates, and the remaining items for the Gaol Establishments were passed.

On the Estimate for pensions being proposed, Mr. MARTIN suggested the propriety of making some provision of this kind for the widow of the late Surveyor-General, Sir Thomas Mitchell, and enquired the services of that gentleman. The House evidently recognizing the justice of the proposition of the hon. member, the COLONIAL SECRETARY stated he would feel bound to bring it under the notice of the Governor-General.

The Estimate for Charitable Allowances was also carried, with some slight discussion. The House adjourned at a quarter to ten o'clock.

THE Government could have no possible object in introducing the Hunter River Tonnage Bill, save the prosperity of the Port of Newcastle and the general convenience of trade. Still, its introduction now seems scarcely desirable. The principle would be unexceptionable, had it been adopted as the settled policy of the country. No course is more obvious than to make productive improvements by borrowed money, and to leave the liquidation of the loan to the gradual operation of a rate or tonnage dues. This has been long the practice in England, and whenever any other has been followed, it has been because the improvement was of a national, rather than local, advantage,—for the shelter and security of the Royal Navy and general commerce, rather than vessels visiting the port for trade.

It is not possible, it must be admitted, always to define the limits of local benefit, distinguished from the welfare of the whole community; and in legislation something must be given and taken without regard to mathematical accuracy. Thus, while the improvement of Newcastle would afford some benefit to the whole colony, it may, nevertheless, be impossible to estimate them by a price. The advantage to the river may be so clearly sufficient to compensate for the impost, that to complain of the burden may be mere querulousness, and deserve no sympathy.

We cannot, however, lose sight of the fact that this principle has not only been applied to the colony universally, but that it was formally abandoned. It may be good in itself, but vitiated by an obvious partiality in its application. When Mr. DEAS THOMSON took office from the port of Sydney, to clear it from a blot, and make it free of the whole world, he certainly raised a barrier to every measure which would impose a tonnage for the improvement of the river. The better course would be now to adopt a fixed and general principle in reference to local improvements. Whatever is to be repaid by assessment, should be contracted for and spent by municipal bodies. Whatever is done by the general revenue, should be subject directly or indirectly to the control of the Executive Government.

If we authorise the Government to contract loans, to expend them at pleasure, and to reimburse them by levies, either on shore or afloat, a gigantic system of patronage, corruption, and abuse will spring up sooner or later. Of this we require no special example, because the history of every country which has not regarded this danger is full of warnings. When a well-organised scheme of municipal management shall be submitted to the Legislature, the Central Government may be greatly relieved,—the guarantee of the general revenue may be given to local bodies when raising money, as an additional security, should the local resources or the local honesty be at fault.

Thus, whatever any municipal body may desire to undertake, will be facilitated by the general legislation, but its actual accomplishment will be left to local management and local taxation.

The large contributions of the district intended to be improved by the Hunter River Tonnage Bill, would perhaps entitle it to some assistance, were the revenue more flourishing. But this mine is now exhausted. As things are, the Government is continually worried by local claims. Gentlemen who tread in the steps of Homer whenever any topic is before the House, who denounce the Executive for seeking to obtain an enormous revenue at all risks and by any means, forget their patriotic maxims when they plead for their own constituents, and their own districts.

No extensive improvements can be made by the dribbles they obtain from a reluctant Legislature, and the only satisfactory plan will be to establish everywhere port trusts and municipalities, and to enable the colonists, according to their public spirit, resources, and population, to hasten the development of their own localities. We have never seen anything but ill-will and discontent result from depending on the general revenue or the Central Government. We are not, however, prepared to say that, looking at the importance of the district concerned, to its contributions to the revenue, and to the advantages possessed by Port Jackson, perfected by the policy of Mr. DEAS THOMSON, that something might not be done with fairness towards an expenditure which is admitted on all hands to be necessary to the welfare both of the colony and the port.

The petition of the people of Newcastle in favour of the Bill is but little to the purpose. Its burdens would not fall on the population of that city, but on the general trade as connected with the entire navigation. They are not owners of the shipping, or consumers of the produce to any great extent; and the proportion they may pay as a community, may be far less than the advantage they may gain as residents in the immediate vicinity of the works on which the outlay is to be expended. On the whole, it is perhaps inexpedient to press the bill.

NOTWITHSTANDING the able support given to the Government by the CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES, we are not assured that the Stock Assessment Bill is a just one as it stands. Mr. PARKER, with characteristic candour, admitted that the abolition of the tax by Mr. DEAS THOMSON, was a false step.—That it ought not to have been removed. Now if the Government had made the same admission, if they had called for the re-imposition, because the repeal was not only a mistake, but a wrong, we should, without draw our opposition at once. We object to the assessment, not for its amount, or from sympathy with the squatters, but because the reason given for its revival condemns it. If when Mr. THOMSON took it off, he was justified—that is because the new system of taxation obtained from the squatters an equivalent,—we cannot admit the equity of its re-imposition, unless it can be shown that the squatters occasion a greater proportionate expense to the colony, and then their rateable contribution to the revenue is less.

Now, what did the Government say in proposing the Tariff recently before the House? If we got the whole as set down in schedule, we

shall not go on with the Assessment of Stock Bill, or with the increased Publicans' Licences Fee. The publicans were protected by a unanimous vote of the representatives—and even a nominee volunteered—but the squatters are not equally beloved. We assert that this promise made by the Government proceeded on the supposition that the squatters were not bound as such to contribute to the general revenue. The Tariff, as it actually passed, did not change in the slightest degree the position of the squatters as taxpayers, or affect the policy avowed by Mr. THOMSON, and reiterated when the offer of compromise was made at an early part of the session.

When we go through the history of the tax, the inconsistency of the Government will reveal itself. An assessment was imposed with the full concurrence of the squatters, to enable the Government to afford protection beyond the borders. It was applied specially for local purposes. This is distinctly expressed by the original Bill. It was double its present proposed amount. When the Order in Council was issued, the origin of the assessment and its local appropriation were before the ministers of the Crown. It is said, probably with truth, that the clauses in this document were proposed by Mr. THOMSON himself. In fixing the rent runs this liability to assessment was probably taken into account. The squatters would have had reason to complain had the burden been continued—had not the Government declared it, not of the nature of a rent, or even of a county rate, or perpetually chargeable on the land, but a tax which might be extinguished by a new and more perfect tariff. The SOLICITOR-GENERAL indeed represented the rate as of the same nature as rent, and justified its restoration on this ground. But we do not see how the Government can get out of a gross inconsistency if this be the fact. If it be a permanent liability, of the nature of rent, the tariff had nothing to do with it; the Government was an unfaithful steward, in suffering it to lapse for one moment. If it were not, then it is not possible to escape from the conclusion that its re-imposition is solely for revenue—and all other things being the same as when it was removed—that it is class legislation, and utterly unjustifiable.

The Government say that the squatters got the sums with the knowledge that they were liable to this assessment. This is not denied. The complaint is not that the tax is restored, but that it is restored in an unprincipled manner. Were it true that the squatters have occasioned the Government greater expenditure than at the ratio of 1852, the restoration would be defensible, but this has not been officially given as a reason; it has been hinted at, but not proved. It may be true, and if so would make out a case for the Executive. Let that be shown and we admit that Mr. THOMSON's reasons for its abolition have no longer force; although then the offered compromise a few weeks ago will appear far from honest and respectable, as proposing relief from a just burden, due from a particular class, by a scheme of universal taxation. The fact, however, is not to be ascertained by a loose calculation of vague items, but by a close and careful comparison of the expenditure and taxation of 1852 and 1853, and the distribution of population at the two periods, and the relation of the outlying districts to the colony at large both then and now.

We believe after all that the most honest step the Government could now take and the best for the squatters, would be to make a clean breast of it. We are disposed after hearing all the arguments, and especially after the admission of Mr. PARKER, whose words have often the force of law, to acknowledge that Mr. THOMSON was wrong. It would have been better, and perhaps more just, had the Government—spending, however, every shilling of the assessment for local purposes—continued it unabated to this day. Admitting, as we do, the sacredness of every compact made by a competent authority in the disposal of the Crown Lands, it does not appear improbable that this assessment was abolished in a prodigious manner in 1852, and upon mistaken grounds. Let the original bargain made then by the Government with the squatters be enforced in all its extent. If they are bound to hold the assessment as one of the terms on which their title rests, let it be insisted on to the full. It would be proper not only to claim the assessment of 1852, but that which preceded it. If the Government will declare that Mr. THOMSON was wrong—that the liability of the squatters was a special liability, different from that of any other colonists—that the application of the tax was, and is ever intended to be local—that it forms a part of the condition of tenure, and is like the land-tax of England—then let it be imposed. We have not a word to say against it, but then also let us not say any more than that we propose that the squatters should be treated as they would be treated if they consent to hunt in company with the Government, and get a sufficient revenue from those who occupy no Crown Lands, and who live by their labour. And, above all,—having wronged them then the last farthing that every possible interpretation of the land regulations enables the Crown or the Council to exact—let the squatters be put into full, instant, and unquestionable possession of all the rights they are entitled to hold under an equally strict interpretation of the law.

**GOLD IN QUARTZ.**—A large specimen of quartz richly and beautifully interspersed with gold, is now being exhibited in the shop of Mr. Judd, jeweller and watchmaker, near the Herald Office. The total weight is 136 ounces, of which from 30 to 40 ounces of the block only are believed to be quartz. In the eccentricity of association and the natural purity of the metal, the specimen is equal, if not superior, to anything of the sort we have seen. It is from the Louisa Creek, and like all the gold in the matrix from that celebrated nugget-field, it partakes strongly of the char, jagged, and water-worn appearance which must be familiar to every one at all conversant in the peculiarities of our auriferous productions.

**MEETING OF DRAPERS' ASSISTANTS.**—A meeting of drapers' assistants was held yesterday evening, at Mr. Palmer's, corner of Pitt and King streets, for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of petitioning their employers to abridge the present hours of business. Mr. Jones was voted to the chair, and after having stated the objects for which the meeting was called, said that a resolution was signed by the various employers connected with the larger houses in the city, in pursuance of a proposition passed at a previous meeting convened for a similar purpose, that a strike be issued, or a demonstration be applied to, to wait upon the employers, requesting them to convene a meeting among themselves to consider upon the urgent request made by persons in their employ, as set forth in the previous resolution. The attendance was small, probably owing to the short notice given.

**THE LAND REGULATIONS.**  
 THE effect produced by the present land regulations upon the prosperity of the colony has formed a fertile subject of discussion almost from the very moment of their promulgation; and, as is usual in all cases where discussion has been keen and protracted, extreme opinions have been advanced on both sides. On the one hand it has been maintained that the prosperity of the colony is entirely due to the extension of the squating system, which has been mainly fostered by the present land regulations; and, on the other hand, it is argued with no less pertinacity that, by repressing agriculture and obstructing the settlement of population on the waste lands, they have inflicted by far more serious injury on the colony than any advantage that may have been gained by favours shown to the pastoral interest.

There is one point on which both parties were agreed throughout, and which they both have pertinaciously advocated, namely, that the present price of the Crown Lands was too high. All agitation on this point, however, has been long abandoned by mutual consent—the price which the public land obtains at auction having apparently demonstrated that such an opinion is no longer tenable. Some persons, however, still retain their conviction as firmly as ever on this point, especially in reference to land in remote situations, if under a new system such land should ever be brought largely into the market; but if there is to be an upset price retained at all, it is evident there must be a great advantage in making it uniform, at least for all lands coming under the denomination of country sections; and, as has been already observed, the prices obtained at the public sales do not show that £1 per acre is too high for the average quality of such land.

Under the present land system, it appears to the writer that the pastoral has gained an undue advantage over the farming interest, in so far as the lands within the settled districts, at least, were not opened to agricultural squatters in the same way as the Crown lands generally were surrendered to the pastoral squatters. It appears almost certain that, if this had been done, an immense impetus would have been given to the agricultural settlement of the colony, and that what is now so much complained of, namely, the want of a rural population, and the consequent deficient production of grain and vegetables, would not in the same degree have been felt. Such a course would have been easily regulated with advantage to the colony, and without detriment to the colony. The right of pre-emption would have given to such an occupier full security for the improvements which he might effect, while the facility of at once entering upon the possession of a spot of ground without the exhaustion of capital necessary for its purchase, and above all without the loss of time which waiting for an opportunity to purchase it often entailed, would have offered inducements for the exercise of his industry which must have had the most beneficial effects. It is greatly to be lamented that some such facility for the agricultural settlement of the colony was not held out by the land regulations. If this had been the case, the colony would have been in a very different position as regards population and resources than it is at present. Such opportunities, offered for independent exertion, would have been followed by the best results, as is illustrated by the enormous amount of toll voluntarily undergone in the pursuit of gold mining,—one of the most powerful incentives thereto undoubtedly being the independent self-reliant course of action which it allows. In so far, therefore, it is submitted the present land system has been a mistake and in the new order of things which we may soon expect it would be advisable to hold out additional encouragement for the agricultural settlement of the lands, which could well be done without thereby lessening the requisite facilities for the pastoral occupation of the regions peculiarly suited to that pursuit.

The pastoral system, which would, perhaps, be most conducive to the interests of the colony, socially, morally, and materially, would, perhaps, be a system which would combine agriculture with grazing. Many may doubt whether such a junction is possible; and in some parts of the colony probably it is not owing to the utter inadaptability of the soil and climate for agricultural operations; but over the greater part of the squating territory it is perfectly so. Such a combination of pursuits could only of course be carried out extensively in the event of its being found imperative to circumscribe the extent of the present runs, the holders making up for the curtailment by the growth and sale of agricultural produce. And here it may be said to anticipate an objection which may be said naturally to arise to this part of the project, namely, that the interior of the colony under present circumstances supplies no market for the productions of agriculture. This is true to a certain extent, but the natural effect of the plan proposed would be to draw population into the interior regions, and this population would soon create the necessary demand, and in the interim all superfluous produce, whether of grain or roots, could be consumed in the fattening of stock of various kinds—by which the above agricultural products could be turned to little less advantage than if sold right off, especially if the saving in carriage be taken into account, and also the large quantity of valuable manure which such a mode of consumption would produce.

## THE LAND REGULATIONS.

THE effect produced by the present land regulations upon the prosperity of the colony has formed a fertile subject of discussion almost from the very moment of their promulgation; and, as is usual in all cases where discussion has been keen and protracted, extreme opinions have been advanced on both sides. On the one hand it has been maintained that the prosperity of the colony is entirely due to the extension of the squating system, which has been mainly fostered by the present land regulations; and, on the other hand, it is argued with no less pertinacity that, by repressing agriculture and obstructing the settlement of population on the waste lands, they have inflicted by far more serious injury on the colony than any advantage that may have been gained by favours shown to the pastoral interest.

There is one point on which both parties were agreed throughout, and which they both have pertinaciously advocated, namely, that the present price of the Crown Lands was too high. All agitation on this point, however, has been long abandoned by mutual consent—the price which the public land obtains at auction having apparently demonstrated that such an opinion is no longer tenable. Some persons, however, still retain their conviction as firmly as ever on this point, especially in reference to land in remote situations, if under a new system such land should ever be brought largely into the market; but if there is to be an upset price retained at all, it is evident there must be a great advantage in making it uniform, at least for all lands coming under the denomination of country sections; and, as has been already observed, the prices obtained at the public sales do not show that £1 per acre is too high for the average quality of such land.

Under the present land system, it appears to the writer that the















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